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INFO RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHINGTON DC
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 DURBAN 000038

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/S RUSH MARBURG

E.O. 12958: DECL: 7/17/2018
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [SE](#)
SUBJECT: KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCIAL POLITICAL CONFERENCES: ANC `UNDER
SIEGE' AND IFP SEES AN OPENING

REF: REFS: (A) 07 DURBAN 26, (B) PRETORIA 1548, (C) PRETORIA 1459, (D) PRETORIA 1422, (E) DURBAN 30, (F) DURBAN 36

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CLASSIFIED BY: CASEY SCHMIDT, POL/ECONOFF, POL, STATE.
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)
Summary

11. (C) Over the last month, both the African National Congress (ANC) and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) held provincial conferences in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) which kicked off preparations for the 2009 general election. For the ANC, the June 20-22 conference was about consolidating party President Jacob Zuma's victory at the December 2007 national conference. For the IFP, the June 28-30 conference was a chance to energize the party to take advantage of ANC mistakes/infighting and regain lost ground in the province. In Zuma's home province, the ANC swept into its provincial executive committee a line up that is almost exclusively made up of pro-Zuma supporters. ANC Secretary General Gwede Mantashe said that the ANC was 'under siege' and focused on the difficulties that some ANC members were creating for the party by not getting on board with the new leadership. The IFP talks a good game but no longer has the wherewithal to make inroads nationally or even take back KZN. End summary.

ANC 'Under Siege'

12. (C) On June 20, the African National Congress (ANC) kicked off its provincial conference in Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal (KZN). Consulate staff attended the opening of the event. With several provincial conferences, regional meetings, and the recent ANC Youth League conference descending into chaos and even some violence, the emphasis was on unity and a calm, orderly conference to set an example for those still to come. The conference did proceed smoothly but it was unlikely to go any other way. Provincial Chairperson for the last 10 years, KZN Premier Sibusiso Ndebele, announced in January that he would not run for Chairperson again, leaving Dr. Zweli Mkhize (former Deputy Chairperson and Provincial Minister for Finance and Economic Development; bio in ref a) to run and win unopposed. Those ANC members in KZN who supported South African President Thabo Mbeki have known for two-three years that their run was likely to come to an end so no fighting was expected by either side at the conference. Including Mkhize (one of Zuma's closest confidantes), the remainder of the 25 member ANC provincial executive is dominated by pro-Zuma supporters. Only two of the 25 are considered to be supporters of South African President Thabo Mbeki, with many senior pro-Mbeki leaders removed from the ANC's top body in the province.

13. (C) The ANC was determined that the conference be one that it could point to as a model for other provincial conferences to follow and one that would demonstrate to the broader South African public that the party was unified. To ensure nothing would go wrong, there was an unusually large number of senior ANC members from outside KZN present including Mantashe, ANC President Jacob Zuma, as well as ANC National Executive Committee (NEC) members Jeff Radebe (also Minister of Transport), Blade Nzimande (South African Communist Party Secretary General), Tokyo Sexwale, and Manto Tshabalala-Msimang (also Minister of Health).

14. (C) ANC Secretary General Mantashe's remarks were the centerpiece of the opening session of the conference, the only session open to conference observers. A relaxed and interesting speaker, Mantashe held the attention of the packed hall of ANC delegates by focusing on unity and attacks on the ANC from

inside and outside the organization. Mantashe began by urging delegates to demonstrate how a model elective conference should take place. He then turned inwards, arguing that some ANC members were asserting that the party's 'decay and decline' began in Polokwane at the December 2007 ANC national conference. Mantashe said this was aimed at 'discrediting' Zuma's leadership and implied that any leadership problems in the ANC began before the new team took over the party. He accused some ANC members of attacking others in the party and acting as if they are 'better' than other members. Mantashe was disturbed that these members of the ANC were predicting that the ANC would not get a majority or would get less of a majority in the 2009 elections. Looking ahead and presaging recent developments (ref b), Mantashe said the ANC should not focus on removing ANC members from office but should work on forging an effective

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transition from the Mbeki to the Zuma administrations in national government. The ANC needed to put together a team to make that transition happen. That was why the party had pushed for ANC Deputy President Kgalema Motlanthe to be in the national parliament and ultimately in government.

15. (C) Looking outside the organization, Mantashe said that the party was misunderstood about its position on disbanding the Scorpions. The issue was simply about creating a larger pool of investigators to fight crime. It wasn't about the Scorpions acting against ANC leaders. That said, added Mantashe, if Zuma is charged 3 times over 8 years then they (the ANC) have an issue. If white counter-revolutionaries get off easy on various charges, then the ANC has an issue. Mantashe summed up saying that the ANC had an 'issue with the unfair administration of justice.' The ANC Secretary General also talked about the Constitutional Court (ref c) and its accusations against Cape Town Judge President Hlophe, arguing strongly that the accusations had nothing to do with Hlophe and had everything to do with Zuma. He predicted that the 'Constitutional Court is preparing for a verdict by preparing a crisis . . .'. While it was cryptically stated, the implication was that the Constitutional Court would rule against Zuma at some point, probably in relation to whether or not his corruption case should go to trial. Finally, Mantashe commented on the ANC Youth League President Julius Malema's comments (ref d) about dying for Zuma, saying that the ANC is told that it 'is not enough' to declare that the statements were 'reckless.' The ANC is told it should condemn the Youth League President which is, according to Mantashe, a call to 'destroy' Malema before he has had a chance to develop. Mantashe made it clear the ANC was not prepared to do that.

16. (C) Overall, the ANC was 'under siege' and had to own up to its problems and come up with solutions. The coming elections would be 'hectic' and 'difficult' and the party must be unified. In a clear reference to ongoing fights within the organization, Mantashe said ANC members were in the 'trenches' before Polokwane. After Polokwane, some were still in the trenches and 'we need to pull them out.' Mantashe cited and condemned four different incidents of ANC-on-ANC violence in recent months as examples of what could not continue to happen. Concluding, Mantashe reminded his audience of what the Polokwane conference was all about - 'a revolt against the movement being controlled by business and political elites.'

IFP Sees an Opportunity

17. (C) On 28 June, President of Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) Prince Mangosuthu Buthelezi delivered a speech to several hundred supporters during the IFP's provincial conference in KwaZulu-Natal (attended by Consulate staff), highlighting the party's mission and challenges leading up to next year's elections. Buthelezi stated that preparations for elections during the next eight months will be critical in preventing South Africa from slipping into a de facto 'elective dictatorship' led by the ANC. According to Buthelezi, the ANC has become increasingly 'arrogant' and 'reckless' because of its hold over national and provincial government, leading to policy decisions without regard for the views expressed by the opposition. As one example, Buthelezi claimed that KwaZulu-Natal's street naming policy has proceeded without consideration for the will of the people or the IFP (ref e and f).

18. (C) Buthelezi also stated that corruption, fraud, maladministration, and deep party divisions within the ANC are hampering solutions to the key problems faced by the people of South Africa, such as worsening rural poverty, food insecurity, HIV/AIDS, and xenophobia, despite billions of dollars at the party's disposal. Moreover, Buthelezi attacked the ANC on its role in the Zimbabwe crisis, claiming Mugabe has cheated his way to victory because of the precedent set by the ANC during

Zimbabwe's 2003 election. At that time, Buthelezi alleged the ANC sent a team of monitors to Zimbabwe and concluded the election was free and fair despite contradictory evidence. Buthelezi claimed that IFP has always called for tough action

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against Zimbabwe and it is now much too late for the ANC 'shout foul.'

19. (C) According to Buthelezi, a broken national and provincial government and a divided ANC has provided the IFP with a historic opportunity to regain the ground lost during the 2004 election and bring multi-party democracy back to South Africa. He admitted that the IFP has its fair share of problems and urged party leaders to quickly sort out its internal quarrels and sharpen policies to offer voters more concrete solutions than the ANC's empty promises.

Comment

110. (C) If the ANC is 'under siege,' it is primarily under siege from within. When Mantashe attacks the Constitutional Court, or makes references to unfair charges against Zuma, or decries violence within the ANC, he is talking about issues that are almost entirely generated by the current split within his own organization and/or by individuals that are ANC members/sympathizers. At the same time, the ANC is still attempting to deal with the fallout of the wholesale turnover of the party's national leadership in Polokwane which are driving similar changes at the provincial and regional levels. This is a process that will take a considerable amount of time, only potentially resolving itself after the general elections when the party and government leadership are again the same individuals. The KZN conference went smoothly because those in the organization who have been Mbeki supporters/appointees long ago saw the hand writing on the wall in this province.

111. (C) While the IFP is still a factor in KZN and the ANC has left it with plenty of openings in the coming election campaign, Buthelezi's party does not have the leadership capacity or the funding to take advantage of those opportunities. Having had the same President for 33 years, the entire lifespan of the party, those who were charismatic and/or capable long ago departed the IFP, leaving it with no one who attracts any attention outside of the nearly 80 year old Buthelezi. At the same time, its reputation after 10 years heading provincial government and dozens of KZN municipalities is not good, leaving the electorate little reason to believe that they should trust the IFP more than the ANC. As an African-dominated party with a significant base in a large province, the IFP is a party that should be able to challenge the ANC here and across the country. For all the reasons above, it won't.

YOUNG